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XXIII. *Extracts of some Letters from Signor Abbate de Venuti, F. R. S. to J. Nixon, A. M. and F. R. S. relating to several Antiquities lately discovered in Italy.*

LETTER I.

Rome, May 1st, 1757.

Dear Sir,

Read June 28.

1759.

— IN an inscription, which I found, while the front of the church of St. John Lateran was erecting, and which is now in the gardens of cardinal Corsini, without the Porta Aurelia (or S^o Pancrazio) mention is made of the * *equites singulares*, as guards of the persons of the emperors.

Herculi Invicto Sacrum

Genio Num. Eq. Sing.

Augg. N. N. Pro Salute

Imp. Cesar. L. Septimii

Severi, et M. Aurelii An

tonini - - - - -

Et Juliae Aug. Matri

Castrorum. Aaug.

- - - - -

- - - - - Do

Mus divinae. Trib.

Occo. Valente, et Octavio

* This communication was occasioned by Dr. Ward's account of an inscription found at Malton (Philos. Transf. Vol. XLIX. Part I. p. 69.) an extract of which had been transmitted to Signor de Venuti by Mr. N.

Pisoni. et. Ti. Exerc. Fl.
 Titiano. et Aurel. Lupo
 C. Julius Secundus
 † . rexit. Ere. suo. Deo. Do. D
 Dedit. Idibus. Sept.
 Severo III. et. Antonino Au
 gg N N. Cos.

As * Commodus was not ashamed to enter the Lists in the amphitheatre, as a gladiator (as appears by an inscription, which I have lately published) I do not question, but that he might have a further ambition to be ranked among the *equites singulares* also.

Without the gate of Sto Paolo, in the way to Ostia, about 8 miles from Rome, there has been discovered, within these few days, a magnificent sepulchre of very large dimensions, and of a round figure. In the middle of it was a sepulchral urn covered all over with sculpture in no inelegant taste. Among the rubbish, on the outside, they met with this inscription in large capitals,

† C. TUCCIU. L. F. TRO. DVVOMVR.
 ACTIA. UXOR.

Not far from this sepulchre, there are now found *ædes rusticæ*, peasants houses, adorned with rich marbles in the walls, and with statues.

† On the left-hand side.

* This refers to Dr. Ward's Account, p. 79.

† Note. To this family (perhaps) might belong M. Tuccius, who was ædilis curulis. Liv. l. xxxv. c. 41. Prætor. Ib. l. xxxvi. c. 45. & triumvir. Ib. l. xxxix. c. 23.

LETTER II.

Rome, Nov. 5. 1757.

DURING my summer recess at Viterbo, as I was tracing out the remains of antiquity in the adjacent country, I dropt, by mere accident, upon the ruins of Ferentum, a town of Etruria, different from that of the same name in Latium, near Mons Albanus. Here, besides the walls of the city, consisting of wrought square stone, I had the satisfaction of finding a temple built of the same materials, of neat workmanship, and a very elegant style of architecture: but what surprised me more was a theatre almost perfect, not only in the circular part of it, but also in that, which was taken up by the scene or stage. It had its porticos intire on the outside, and likewise three entrances, answering to the *valvæ regiæ*, and the *hospitalia*, described by * Vitruvius: so that nothing was wanting to render it complete, but the *orchestra* and *pulpitum*. These remains are accessible to all the world; yet no one hitherto has delineated or published them. We have several valuable monuments in Latium, Sabina, Etruria, Campania,

* The learned abbate refers here (I presume) to Vitruv. de archit. l. v. c. 6. (Cunei) qui sunt in imo, et dirigunt scalaria, erunt numero septem; reliqui quinque scenæ designabunt compositionem, et unus medius contra se *valvas* regias habere debet, et qui erunt dextrâ ac sinistrâ *hospitium* designabunt compositionem.

Ipsæ scenæ suas habeant rationes explicatas, ita uti mediæ valvæ ornatus habeant aulæ regiæ, dextrâ ac sinistrâ hospitalia. Ib. c. 7.

For a fuller account of these entrances into the ancient theatres, vid. Montfauc. Antiq. explic. Tom. III. Par. II. l. ii. cap. 2, 3, & 4.

and Calabria, which contain subjects of the highest erudition, but yet are unknown to, and disregarded by, learned men ; while at the same time they are searching, with great expence and labour, after others in Greece and Afia, which are already known, and perhaps not so intire as these. I have caused a drawing to be made of the theatre above-mentioned, and some time or other (probably) may offer it to the public.

I have lately met with a curious dissertation, published by a professor of the university of Pisa, upon a gem, which exhibits the Theban war, with the names of five heroes engraved in Etruscan characters upon it. You (in all probability) saw it at Florence, in the cabinet of Baron Stosch, who a few days ago was struck with an apoplexy, and lies now at the point of death.

L E T T E R III.

Rome, Jan. 31, 1759.

A FEW months ago, I published a dissertation upon a little marble relievo, inscribed with Greek characters of the smallest size. The subject of it is the story of Circe, as related by Homer, *Odyss.* lib. x. It is really remarkable, that whereas there are extant several ancient monuments alluding to the *Iliad* of that poet, very few are found, which refer to the *Odyssey*.

There has lately been discovered without the *Porta Prænestina* (or Maggiore) about four miles from Rome, an old sepulchral apartment, wherein were

four

four sarcophagus's, adorned with very curious relief's. Two of them were of a large size ; the other two of a smaller. On the first of the large ones was elegantly carved the Fight of the Giants, who are represented with thighs composed of serpents. The second appeared to me to express the Combat of the Amazons and Theseus. Of the two smaller sarcophagus's, one exhibited Bacchus in a chariot drawn by centaurs, and preceded by the whole chorus of the Bacchantes : the other seemed to be a battle (perhaps) between the Greeks and the Trojans ; as one part of the figures had long beards, tunics, and long breeches : all of them were of exquisite workmanship.

There has been lately dug up here an admirable statue of Venus, with an elegant Cupid standing upon a dolphin ; as also several curious inscriptions.

I have communicated your extract of Mr. Swinton's most learned conjectures concerning a coin of Monefes *, a Parthian king, to Signor Corsini. He approved of the performance, and admired the judgment and acute penetration of the author : but excepted a little to that part, where, in order to ascertain the epoch of the piece, he [Mr. Swinton] expresses a doubt with regard to the *Victory* on the reverse of it ; as there was no engagement that year between the Romans and the Parthians. But when Monefes had usurped the throne, dispossessed the lawful heirs, and plundered the neighbouring nations, it is no wonder, that he should stamp a *Victory* on his coin : which symbol ought to be referred to some

* Philos. Transact. Vol. L. Part I. p. 175.

considerable advantage gained over the Barbarians, and not over the Romans.

XXIV. *An Account of some Experiments relating to the Preservation of Seeds: In Two Letters to the Right Honourable the Earl of Macclesfield, President of the Royal Society. From John Ellis, Esq; F. R. S.*

My Lord, London, Jan. 18. 1759.

Read Jan. 18,
1759. **A**S the supplying our colonies with
the seeds of useful plants, in order
to have their produce imported from thence into
England, instead of the places of their natural growth
in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as we do at present, is a
matter of some importance, therefore I am persuaded,
that experiments tending to promote so useful and
beneficial a work, will meet with the approbation of
this honourable Society.

Among many useful seeds, which I sent governor Ellis in the year 1757, were some acorns of the cork-tree, which were put in a box in sand. These, he mentions in his last letters, were entirely spoiled in the voyage; and observes, that the confined air in the hold of ships, occasions such hot and penetrating steams, especially in warm climates, that it disposes all seeds, in common packages, to a sweating or putrefactive fermentation, by which the vegetative quality of many is entirely destroyed: and therefore advises,